10 June 1975

The Structure of Civil-Military Relations in the USSR

Introduction

The Soviet military establishment developed from the forces hastily organized to defend the Bolshevik seizure of power in October 1917. The armed forces created at that time were proclaimed to be of a new type -- committed to protecting the interests of workers and peasants, or, in Robert Tucker's term, of a "movement regime." Since then the Soviets have continued to define the purposes of their forces in ideological terms and have rationalized their military policies on the basis of Marxist-Leninist theories of the class struggle.

These rationalizations have found general acceptance among a population conditioned by history to see Russian lands as vulnerable to invasion from all quarters. Modern weaponry has for most Soviet citizens only added new dimensions to what has been perceived as a more or less permanent threat.

Since the end of World War II, the United States has been considered by the Soviets to be their principal military and ideological threat. Since the mid-1960s, Chinese military and political policies have been a matter of increasing concern to the Soviet leadership. But the Soviets regard Chinese military capabilities as distinctly inferior to their own and seem to be confident that this imbalance will deter any rash Chinese action in the near term.

The requirements of national security have justified economic priority to the maintenance of a well-armed and equipped military machine. To justify extensive commitment of resources to defense in a period of detente, Soviet propaganda continues to point to the presence of dangerous aggressive forces in the world that could rapidly change the prevailing climate of international politics. Also, the Soviet military stresses the inherent value of military service as a means of disciplining and indoctrinating Soviet youth before it enters the labor force, a socializing role independent of external conditions.

The importance of military power to the image of the Soviet Union as superpower is well understood by the political leadership, and the armed forces contribution to the Soviet achievement is frequently and lavishly acknowledged. Nevertheless, the Soviet political leadership holds long-standing suspicions toward the military and, in particular, its high command. As students of history -- especially revolutionary history -- the leadership is keenly aware that the armed forces represent a potentially competitive source of power. To guard against the possibility that ambitious marshals might try to usurp excessive power, as Marshal G. K. Zhukov was accused of doing in 1957, systems of overt and covert political surveillance were installed throughout the armed forces from their inception, and they have remained a prominent feature of the Soviet military structure since.

The current political leadership appears to have achieved a more comfortable relationship with the military than that which existed when both Stalin and Khrushchev regarded the military with intense suspicion. The larger military budgets since Khrushchev's fall in 1964 undoubtedly have contributed

to the easing of political-military frictions, giving the military confidence that national security will not be sacrificed to the interest in detente.

How the Soviet Military Establishment is Organized

According to the Soviet constitution, only the Supreme Soviet has the power to decide questions of war and peace and to organize the defense of the country. In practice, major decisions affecting the military are made by the highest officials of the Communist Party after considering appropriate military advice. These decisions are then translated into laws and regulations by the Supreme Soviet or into instructions of the Council of Ministers.

The Soviet Minister of Defense, Marshal A. A. Grechko, and all of his deputies are professional military officers, a sharp contrast with formal civilian management of the defense establishment in most western governments. Grechko, in addition to his ministerial post, has also been a member of the Communist Party Politburo since 1973, the first professional military man to be included in this powerful group since the fall of Zhukov. His

elevation to the Politburo blurs to some extent the roles of the party and the military in managing the armed forces.

Reporting to Grechko are the Chief of the General Staff, the commanders-in-chief of the armed services, the head of Civil Defense, and a number of directorates which administer common functions such as personnel and finance. There are also commanders-in-chief for Rear Services (logistics) and for construction.

Within the Soviet Ministry of Defense, the General Staff has traditionally occupied the most crucial and prestigous position. Staffed by selected officers, many of whom are graduates of the Academy of the General Staff, the General Staff and its officers are cast in the tradition of the pre-1945 German General Staff; i.e., it is a unified organ rather than a joint representation of the several services. Qualified officers spend long years in specialized staff positions, in contrast to the US system which emphasizes periodic rotation between line and staff responsibilities. Among Soviet military institutions, the General Staff alone

has the access to foreign intelligence and comprehensive information on Soviet forces necessary to develop and defend a military position on policy matters.

The General Staff is responsible for both force planning and operations planning, a role that has grown with the demands of modern warfare. Recommendations of the General Staff on such matters as weapons programs, major military organizational changes, redeployments, mobilization policy, and military doctrine carry considerable weight which can also affect the conduct of foreign policy. General Staff recommendations have probably defined the negotiating parameters in the current strategic arms limitation talks and indeed the military members of the Soviet SALT delegation are believed to be General Staff officers.

Several recent developments, however, suggest that the influence of the General Staff may be declining or under challenge. In early 1972 its prestigous former chief, Marshal M. V. Zakharov, died and was replaced by General V. G. Kulikov, a relatively junior general whose main military experience was in command positions outside of

the General Staff. In 1970 and 1974 two new deputy ministerial positions were created -- one to deal with matters of weapons technology. The other may deal with resource allocation and force planning. The officers assigned to these posts were formerly in the General Staff (and also involved in SALT), suggesting a transfer of some General Staff functions to the more direct control of Defense Minister Grechko. Most evidence to date indicates, however, that the General Staff is still the "brain of the armed forces."

The five services -- the Ground Forces, the Strategic Rocket Force, the Navy, the Air Forces, and the National Air Defense Force -- divide the operational military missions generally as their titles indicate.

The weapons requirements of the services are balanced with the defense industrial capabilities of the country by the Military-Industrial Commission (VPK). In addition to overseeing the various ministries and agencies involved in weapons programs, the VPK provides a high level forum for discussion of defense production matters and facilitates negotiations with components of the defense industries' main customer -- the Ministry of Defense.

As a governmental body, chaired by Deputy Premier L. V. Smirnov, the VPK is nominally subordinate to Premier Kosygin, but in practice Smirnov reports to the Party Secretariat -- directly to D. F. Ustinov (through whom the Politburo monitors defense industry programs) and thus indirectly to General Secretary Brezhnev.

Extensive interaction occurs between the military and defense industry at the working level. Each military service has a technical directorate whose responsibilities include the definition of system requirements and the setting of individual priorities for weapons and equipment. Here also the General Staff has been the focal point for coordinating specific requirements which originate with the armed services. Military representatives are present at the production level to monitor and approve each phase of the research and development cycle and to conduct quality control tests during production runs.

Although the Soviet military establishment and the defense-industrial system that supplies it are highly centralized by comparison with US counterparts, they are by no means monolithic. They are composed

of many subcomponents with different and sometimes competing interests. Over the years there has been evidence of genuine conflict within the Soviet military over the allocation of resources and roles and missions among services. Similarly, there have occasionally been cases of competition among the major institutions designing and producing Soviet weaponry. Khrushchev exploited such internal competition to press policies distasteful to several factions of the Soviet military. The policies of the Brezhnev regime, while continuing along the broad outlines developed under Khrushchev, have tended to provide something for all important claimants in the military under the rubric of "balanced forces."

How Military Policy is Formulated

The Soviet military establishment, like other elements of the Soviet state apparatus, widely proclaims that the Communist Party provides leadership and guidance for all of its activities. At the highest level, the most important matters of military policy are considered by a small political-military group --

The Defense Council -- chaired by Brezhnev. Other members of the Politburo who sit on the council include Kosygin, Podgorny, and Grechko and, depending on the subject under consideration, other political and military leaders. The recommendations of this group are then presented for approval to the entire Politburo. Politburo decisions are then forwarded to the government ministries for execution.

Brezhnev's association with military matters predates World War II. During the War he rose to the rank of Major General as a military-political officer, i.e., a "commissar." He was recently given the rank of Army General, equivalent to a 4-star. As chairman of the Defense Council, he is the highest individual source of overall authority in defense policy matters.

In time of war or national military emergency, Brezhnev would probably assume the post of Commander-in-Chief of the Soviet armed forces although his potential title has not been proclaimed publicly. As Commander-in-Chief, he would rely on the strategic and operational advice of the Minister of Defense to make decisions which would be executed through

the General Staff. As chairman of the Defense Council, he would direct the national effort in such areas as mobilization, defense-related production and civil defense. The role of the Party General Secretary in military policymaking during peacetime and in active conduct of military affairs in wartime follows a pattern established by Lenin and continued both by Stalin and Khrushchev.

In day-to-day military activities, the implementation of Party military policies is facilitated by the Party membership in the armed forces. At higher levels of command, virtually all military officers are members of the Party and subject to its instruction and discipline. Party organization within the armed forces resembles that in other areas of Soviet society, and, theoretically, the role of the Party as the inspirational leader of the Soviet state is duplicated in the military. In practice, however, Party life in the armed forces appears to be somewhat forced, dependent for its vitality on the presence of uniformed military-political officers who supervise political activities at all levels of command.

The military-political officer, once called the commissar, is a unique feature of the Soviet military and those Eastern European forces patterned after it. Although formally subject to normal military control, the political officer has an independent channel of communication which links him with the political officer at the next higher level of command and ultimately to the Main Political Administration, a section of the Party Central Committee. Through this channel, the Party leadership obtains a check on military performance and insures military subordination to Party instructions. The political officer supervises troop indoctrination and the activities of Party organizations in the military. He also reports on the loyalty of all military personnel assigned to his unit. No one can be promoted or sent to a military school without his approval. In the past, the political officer and his power has been a source of contention in the armed services. Lately, however, it appears that the military recognize the positive contribution indoctrination can make to the accomplishment of the military mission or, in any case, understand and accept the inevitable presence of political control.

As modern weapons and technology have been introduced into the armed forces, there has been speculation outside the Soviet Union that the increased specialization and professionalization of the military would inevitably create a serious gap between the professional officer and his Party watch dog. Up to now, this phenomenon appears to have remained under control. Such tendencies have been inhibited by the Party's insistence that military officers must be members of the Party to advance and that they must participate fully in Party activities. The political officers have also been encouraged to develop to some degree the skills and knowledge of the branch to which they are assigned and are on occasion outspoken defenders of seemingly parochial military interests. Finally, Soviet propaganda designed for armed forces consumption emphasizes the ultimate importance of the human factor in any weapons system and hence the continued need for the political officer and his functions.

The Soviet Military and Detente

The current period of detente has not threatened the vital interests of, nor has it been ungenerous to, the Soviet military. Throughout the recent series of arms control negotiations, the General Staff has appeared to maintain effective influence over the framing of issues, and negotiating positions on the Soviet side, and it has tended to maintain a near-monopoly on the flow of important types of defense-related information to lower levels of the foreign policy apparatus. While the Soviet military has occasionally hinted at some concern about Brezhnev's arms control policies, Brezhnev seems to have taken care to assure himself military backing during each stage of the SALT. Grechko has generally supported Brezhnev's foreign policy initiatives -- one reason why he is on the Politburo. Moreover, the military's ability to ally itself with other elements of the Soviet national security community -- especially the several industrial ministries engaged in defense production -- assures its participation as major detente-related issues are discussed at the highest levels of the Soviet government.

Soviet political and military leaders believe that a diversified and modern military machine is an essential foundation for any foreign policy, including one conducted in an era of detente. The expanded economic relations which have been sought by the USSR increase the opportunities for transfer of important defense-related technology to the USSR from Western Europe, Japan, and the US. The Soviet military is aware of the technology gap between themselves and the West; and Soviet initiatives to US aircraft, computer, electronic, and other Western industrial sectors are of special interest to them.

The Soviet military tend to take a uniformly gloomy view of potential military threats from foreign states and to seek maximum security in the steady improvement of their own forces. They are also wedded to official doctrines and strategies stressing forces that can actually fight and, in some manner, win a nuclear conflict. To a Western observer, Soviet strategic doctrine looks much like classical strategy in nuclear dress . . . and is disturbing for that reason, because it fails to make self-restraint a theoretical virtue. These attitudes

cannot but pose problems for arms control efforts that attempt to establish mutual security in terms of mutual restraint and a mutual recognition of mutual social vulnerability to nuclear war. The Soviet military admit the vulnerability of their society to catastrophic retaliation, but do not appear to accept it as a permanent, much less as a desirable, condition.

Happily, there appear to be others in the USSR who have taken issue in aesopian terms with official military doctrine. Since the early 1950s there have been figures, some quite authoritative, such as Khrushchev, who appear to believe that the very nature of nuclear weapons denies the concept of victory, thereby denying the concept of superiority, and in turn challenging the need for additional armaments. This arcane debate about the nature and consequences of nuclear war . . . and, implicitly, their meaning for arms budgets . . . had proceded for two decades in the USSR off and on. It will probably continue as long as the nuclear dilemma is with us.

The Soviet military is not a purely autonomous and sovereign source of policy influence. Subject to rigorous political controls at the top and at lower levels, the Soviet military establishment can always be disciplined to the aims of a strong and united political leadership. Thus, the Soviet military could not in normal circumstances simply veto Soviet SALT or detente policies backed by the political leadership as a whole. The influence of the military as an institution resides in the fact that its outlook on the world is in considerable measure shared by the Soviet regime as a whole.

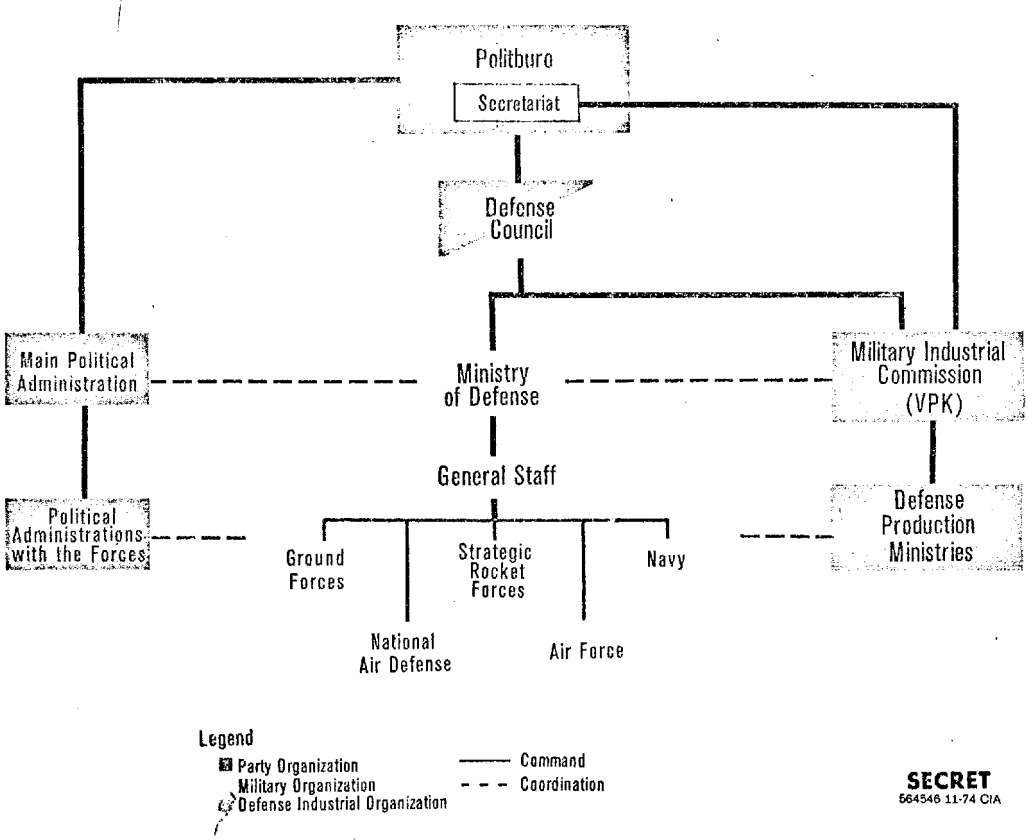
When nations answer for themselves the question: What are the proper moral, political, and strategic limits on military power? . . . they do so, not only in terms of political philosophy or strategic theory. They answer mainly in terms of experience: What military power or the lack of it has meant to them.

For Soviet political and military leaders alike, history is seen as a process of challenges and conflicts with accommodation being the exception rather than the rule. Despite a genuine desire to better the lives of Soviet citizens and to compete ideologically for influence in the world over other

peoples, both political and military leaders draw guidance from an historical experience in which military power founded the Soviet state, defended it successfully from the most dire threats, and made it into a global power.

TAB

SOVIET DEFENSE ESTABLISHMENT



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DAMI-FII

8 APR 1975

STAT [redacted]

Chief, Strategic Evaluation Center
Office of Strategic Research
Central Intelligence Agency
Washington, D.C. 20505

STAT Dear [redacted]

One of the things that has troubled me during my tenure as the Assistant Chief of Staff for Intelligence is that we on the Army Staff become so preoccupied by the myriad details of our day-to-day actions that we often lose sight of broader problems and concerns. Specifically, I find that my action officers and analysts, because of the nature of their positions and demands of the daily requirements, find it difficult to maintain a broad perspective on many long-range developments that do not impact on our immediate tasks. With this in mind, I am developing a seminar for the 24-25 June timeframe that is designed to examine some of the more abstract problems of the contemporary environment. The seminar, "Perspectives on Strategic Intelligence and National Security," will be held at the Industrial College of the Armed Forces, Fort McNair, Washington. I expect that three or four hundred representatives from the Army Staff, other government agencies, academia, and private industry will be in attendance.

A tentative agenda for the two-day seminar is attached. I plan to direct our attention to four major concerns: the problem of resource scarcities and the attendant effect on the international system; recent political-military developments in the PRC, the Soviet Union, and the United States; strategic intelligence in today's environment; and the role of military power in contemporary international politics. As you can see, the seminar is fairly-well "structured," reflecting my desire to restrict the scope of the agenda and to devote maximum time to the question and answer sessions--which often produce the most valuable exchange of information.

9 APR 1975

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[redacted]

As you might note from the agenda, I would like to draw on your expertise for the session relating to "Politico-Military Relations." I would request that you join Dr. Roger Hilsman and Dr. Richard Thornton in presenting 20-25 minute papers examing recent politico-military developments, focusing on the Soviet Union in your case. If you can participate, I will ask MAJ Tyrus W. Cobb (OX 71800/79933), my project action officer, and Dr. George Kalbouss, the session moderator, to contact you regarding the specifics of the conference. I am, as you might guess, quite pleased with our tentative agenda and speakers, and certainly hope you will be able to join us.

Sincerely,

(Sgd) Harold R. Aaron

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as

HAROLD R. AARON
Major General, GS
ACofS for Intelligence

PERSPECTIVES ON
STRATEGIC INTELLIGENCE AND NATIONAL SECURITY

TUESDAY, 24 JUNE 1975

0900	Introductory Remarks	MG Harold R. Aaron, ACSI
0910	Moderator's Introduction: Resource Scarcities and International Politics	Prof H. J. Psomiades Queens College, CUNY
0915	Natural Resources: The Effect on the US Strategic Posture in the Next Decade	Ambassador John Patrick Walsh State Department Advisor to the Commander, the Air Universi
0945	International Monetary Flows: The Gathering Storm	Dr. Mark Earle, Assistant Director, SRI Strategic Studies Center
1015	Break	
1030	Observations: Soviet and US Vulnerabilities	Dr. John Hardt, Library of Congress
1200	Lunch:	
1330	Moderator's Introduction: Political-Military Relations	Dr. George Kalbouss, Executive Secretary, American Assoc. for the Advancement of Slavic Studies
1340	Political Military Developments in....	
	The Soviet Union	[redacted] STAT Central Intelligence Agency
	The PRC	Prof Richard Thornton George Washington Univ.
	The United States	Prof Roger Hilsman Columbia University
500	Break	
515	Observations	Mr. George Vest Director, Political-Military Bureau Department of State

WEDNESDAY, 25 JUNE 1975

0900	Moderator's Introduction: Strategic Intelligence in the Contemporary Environment	Dr. Paul Holman Director, Russian Area Program, Georgetown Univ.
0910	Strategic Intelligence: Do we need it?	Mr. Ray Cline former Director of INR, Department of State
0935	Intelligence: Responsibilities and Limitations	Mr. Bill Miller Director, US Senate Select Investigating Committee on Intelligence
1000	Why the Intelligence Community	LTG Sam Wilson, Director Deputy to the DCI for the Intelligence Community
1025	Break	
1040	Questions from the Floor	
1140	Lunch:	
1300	Moderator's Introduction: The Use and Misuse of Military Force in International Politics	MG Robert Gard CG, US Army Military Personnel Center
1315	Limitations on the Projection of Military Power	Prof Earl Ravenal John Hopkins University
1345	Contemporary International Relations and the Role of Military Forces	Dr. Fritz Kraemer Special Advisor to the Chief of Staff, US Army
1415	Break	
1430	Observations	GEN Andrew Goodpaster Former SACEUR
1445	Observations	Rep. Paul McCloskey US House of Representatives
1500	Questions from the Floor	
1545	Closing Remarks	